DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 184 490 HE 012 555

AUTHOR	Hawkridge, David G.
TITLE	Setting Up the Open University. Monograph No. 5.
INSTITUTION	Open Univ., Walton, Bletchley, Bucks (England).
PUB DATE	Dec 76
NOTE	69p.
AVAILABLE FROM	The Open University, Institute of Educational Technology, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA, Bucks, England.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education; Administrative Organization; Awards; Budgeting; Conferences; *Educational History; Educational Policy; Enrollment Trends; External Degree Programs; Federal Aid; Fees; Foreign Countries; Government School Relationship; Higher Education; *Open Enrollment; *Open Universities; Opinions; Organizational Communication; Political Influences; Political Issues; *Public Opinion; Student Costs
IDENTIFIERS	*Open University (Great Britain)

ABSTRACT

An unofficial history is given of the Open University in England. Its intent is to recreate the atmosphere in which the institution was conceived and organized. First the main events of 1963-1969 are summarized. Separate sections are then devoted to events in 1970 and each subsequent calendar year through 1975. Milestones are noted, and the narrative throughout brings in opinions, rumors, and controversy from the press and from academic circles. Timelines highlight the successes and disappointments discussed in the narrative. Enrollment, the budget process, and significant events such as awards, ceremonies, structural administrative changes, government decisions, fee changes, and conferences are noted. A list of references is included. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED184490

The Open University
Institute of Educational Technology

MONOGRAPH No. 5

SETTING UP THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

by

David G. Hawkridge
Professor of Applied Educational Sciences

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Open

Issues

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

HE 012 555

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA
Telephone: Milton Keynes (0908) 74066

SETTING UP THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

David G. Hawkridge

Institute of Educational Technology
Monograph No. 5
December 1976

© David G. Hawkridge

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Establishing the Open University: 1963-69	3
Preparing for 25,000: 1970	10
First teaching year: 1971	14
The net spreads: 1972	21
Business booms: 1973	28
Year of uncertainty: 1974	36
Consolidation: 1975	45
A codicil	57
References	58

Introduction

The Open University has become a success story. It has also faced disaster, even abolition, remarkably often in only a few years. It has been seen as a political plaything, an educational gimmick, a technological monster and a costly frippery. Others have hailed it as Britain's best contribution to education in the second half of the twentieth century, a masterly harnessing of technology to social purposes and a powerful catalyst in higher education throughout the world.

My purpose in this monograph is to recreate the atmosphere in which the Open University began. I have not written an official history. For those who would like to read "authorised" accounts of the University's development, the Vice-Chancellor's book (Perry, 1976) and his reports (Perry, 1972, 1973a, 1973b, 1975) are by far the best sources. More fragmentary pictures can be obtained from two other books (Tunstall, 1974; Ferguson, 1975) by members of staff. These cover the first three or four years. The origins of the University have been described quite fully by Brian MacArthur, who was Education Correspondent for the Times Educational Supplement (TES) during the years leading up to the foundation of the University in 1969, and who became editor of the new Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) in 1971. In his chapter in Tunstall's book (MacArthur, 1974) he delineates the political processes and planning committees leading to the granting of the University's Royal Charter.

The structure of this monograph is simple. In the first section I have summarised the main events of the period 1963-69. Here I have been compelled to draw upon a variety of written sources, since I was not in England at that time to observe events for myself. In this section, and subsequently, I have tried to bring into the narrative some details of the opinions being passed on the University in the serious press and in educational circles. Then, starting with 1970, I have written one section for each calendar year. It is true that calendar years are quite arbitrary periods, and that the University does not slip from one to the next with a perceptible jolt, but it is also true that the University's academic year and its fiscal year run from January to December. For each year, I have provided a list of significant milestones, and my narrative is built around these.

Inevitably, there will be some errors of fact or of interpretation that will come to light in what I have written. I take full responsibility for these, since I have not asked anyone to share that burden with me by commenting on this manuscript. The IET Monograph series was conceived as a pre-publication series, and several of the earlier titles have now been published commercially. In this case, I have no immediate plans for wider publication, but I shall certainly note all comments reaching me about what I have written.

I am grateful to the Acting Director of IET, Professor Brian Lewis, for authorising publication of this monograph, and to Mrs. Diana Griffiths for assistance in preparing the manuscript and arranging for printing.

Establishing the Open University: 1963-69

When Harold Wilsom came to the University in November 1972 he gave a lecture in which he told his audience that he had spent part of Easter Sunday 1963 writing an outline of his idea on what the University of the Air should be like. He based what he wrote partly on what he had seen in the United States, where he had seen the work of the Chicago Television College, and in the Soviet Union, where he was much impressed by the large numbers of people who were gaining professional qualifications by correspondence. He also drew on the thinking of Michael Young, who had written an article proposing an Open University (Young, 1962).

Harold Wilson put those ideas into a speech in Glasgow in September 1963, but what he spoke of then bears only slight resemblance to the Open University today. He did not see the University of the Air as an autonomous university but rather as a radical re-ordering of a range of existing institutions and agencies. He thought the other universities might combine to set up an examining body for his new creation, for example. He did not think of it as a vocational education college, but as a way for people to enrich their lives, even if it did not earn them an extra penny (Open House 71, 1972). He was looking for a way to provide home study up to university and higher technical standards. He did not describe it as an institution serving in particular the working class.

In a sense, Harold Wilson misled people. The title he had chosen, 'University of the Air', caused many to question whether anything worthwhile could be taught by using only broadcasts. The TES headline was 'Up in the Air' (TES 13 Sep 1963). An article appeared in the New Statesman entitled 'B. Air' (Turnstile, 1966).

The idea of a university teaching by television or radio or both was not new. Richard Hooper (1974) has discovered a 1922 reference, in an American radio magazine, to a university of the air. Grattan (1974) points out that when the BBC appointed its first Director of Education, the Radio Times of June 13, 1924, carried the headline: 'The Broadcast University'. MacArthur (1974) says that a wireless

Establishing the Open University: 1963-69

1963	Sep	Harold Wilson's speech in Glasgow on a 'University of the Air'
1965	Mar	Jennie Lee given responsibility for the 'University of the Air'
1966	Feb	White Paper from Jennie Lee to Parliament on the setting up of a 'University of the Air'
1967	Sep	Labour Government appoints a Planning Committee for an Open University
1968	Jun	Perry, Deputy Principal of Edinburgh University, chosen to be Vice-Chancellor
	Nov	Planning Committee reaches agreement with BBC on air time for an OU
1969	Jan	Report of the Planning Committee accepted by the Labour Government but not by Conservatives
		Lord Crowther appointed as first Chancellor
		Perry and Christodoulou (Secretary of the OU) start work, plan to recruit 4 academic staff for each of 22 disciplines
	Feb	Director of Studies, Local Centres and Tutorial Services, takes up post
	Mar	Libraries worry about impact of OU on them
		Walton Hall, near Bletchley, chosen as future site of OU and first plan for site approved by Planning Committee
	May	Charter for the Open University receives Royal Assent
	Jun	Council of the University meets for the first time
	Jul	Charter formally presented and Lord Crowther installed as Chancellor
	Sep	About 40 academic staff in post; course production starts in earnest
		First meeting of the University's Senate decide OU will offer only one bachelor's degree - B.A.
		Arts Building opens; staff move out from Belgrave Sq.
	Oct	Academic Advisory Committee set up by Privy Council to watch over academic standards
	Nov	Announcement that first intake will be 25,000 students
		Appointment of 12 Regional Directors completed

university was proposed within the BBC by a Mr. J. C. Stobart in 1926, who considered it but a 'phantasy..... a Wellsian sketch of possibilities'. Iowa State University probably holds the record for the first televised courses -- in art, engineering and botany in the 1930s - - and Pennsylvania State University used close circuit television on a massive scale in the 1950s (Hooper, 1974).

The success of many of the early attempts tc use broadcasting in higher education was very much in doubt, and if the broadcasting aspect of Harold Wilson's proposal had been the dominant one the Open University would probably have not been established. His title stuck for a long time; it was still being used by the press long after the Open University had begun teaching students.

Fortunately, the Glasgow speech contained other ingredients which contributed to the survival of the set of ideas which became the Open University. The first was that the proposal arrived in time for the swing towards equal opportunity in education. This swing accelerated under the Labour Government of 1964-70. Second, it proposed a way of strengthening the adult education movement immensely in a short time. Some members of the movement did not see it as such, and indeed a few still criticise the Open University for having diverted resources away from themselves. Third, the University of the Air fitted in with the drive towards a society founded on beneficial uses of technology, to which Harold Wilson and many of his party were fully committed. People were curious about using the concepts and processes, to say nothing of the tools of technology for educational purposes, and the proposal caught their attention. To these three, some would add the economic pressure being exerted in education by increased enrolments as secondary and tertiary levels, although these pressures only built up strongly in the late sixties, and the increased need for rewarding activities to fill new-found leisure. Education permanente was not yet a European watchword.

Harold Wilson's proposal did not actually become part of the Labour election manifesto in 1964 (Perry, 1976), but Labour were returned to power. The voters, inadvertently, had given the University

of the Air its first chance to succeed.

Lena Jeger, writing in the Guardian in October 1965 (Jeger,1965) characterised the scheme as an 'audacious novelty'. By that time, Harold Wilson had given Jennie Lee, recently appointed Minister of State for the Arts, the responsibility for developing his proposal. MacArthur (1974) describes well how she took the whole scheme and made it her own, sweeping aside opposition of all sorts. She dismissed plans for any kind of federal or umbrella organisation and insisted that a proper university should be founded.

Jennie Lee set up an advisory committee with herself in the chair. Its members were strong on broadcasting and educational technology but lacked real support from the higher education sector, which remained very sceptical. MacArthur (1974) says that she drove the committee hard; it reported just before the 1966 general election. The report became a White Paper to Parliament in February (Cmnd 2922, 1966); its title was 'A University of the Air'.

The general response to the White Paper was not enthusiastic. The Conservatives did not like the scheme and said so. The TES still saw the University of the Air as a pipe dream (TES 4 Mar 1966) and claimed there were many snags (TES 11 Mar 1966). The country was in a state of economic crisis and could scarcely afford to start new major projects. In 1966 it seemed unlikely that the University of the Air would ever be set up.

According to Perry (1976), the proposals became part of the Labour manifesto for the spring election through being accepted by a meeting of the Cabinet and members of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party in February. Labour won the election, but there were still many obstacles to be overcome.

What had become a personal mission on Jennie Lee's part could not be dropped lightly, however, and when national affairs were once again on a more even keel, she sought the basis for a powerful Planning Committee. She wanted members from every influential sector of educational opinion and a chairman of impeccable academic credentials. She was able to persuade Sir Peter Venables, Vice-

Chancellor of Aston University and deputy chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, to take on the chairmanship. This was most important since he had strong links not only with the university world but also with Further Education, that nebulous non-university post-secondary sector of British education, and with broadcasting.

The Planning Committee began, in September 1967, the task of planning an Open University. The new title, foreshadowed in a phrase in the White Paper, got away from the broadcasting flavour and stressed social utility instead. Since the Committee had a much broader base than the previous advisory committee, this trend away from broadcasting was strengthened. For all that, the future involvement of the BBC seemed assured, at any rate for television via the BBC-2 channel, as MacArthur (1974) has described.

The Planning Committee worked very fast indeed. It knew it had the backing of the Prime Minister. Jennie Lee was determined to see her proposal, as she now saw it, become fact. The Committee seems to have been able to assume that its plans would be accepted by Government. Indeed, even before its final report was presented to Government on December 31 1968, it had found a Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Walter Perry, Deputy Principal and Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Edinburgh. Together with Mr. A. Christodoulou, the Secretary of the Open University, Perry took up his duties weeks before Edward Short, Labour Secretary of State for Education and Science, stated in Parliament that the Government had accepted the plan of development outlined in the report.

Harold Wilson's Easter Sunday pipe dream had been transformed by Jennie Lee's Planning Committee. In turn, Perry and Christodoulou set about transforming the Planning Committee's report, which was accepted quickly by the Labour Government and not actually rejected by the Conservatives, who criticised it for presenting an expensive scheme. The second transformation was to be even more radical than the first.

The position of the future was further secured by the appointment of Lord Crowther, a Conservative, as the first Chancellor. Most

Chancellors of English universities have mainly formal duties, but Lord Crowther drew on his immense experience as editor and later chairman of the Economist and as a businessman to help the Open University get started.

Other staff were quickly appointed. Among the first to take up post was the Director of Studies, Local Centres and Tutorial Services, Robert Beevers. Other Directors of Studies arrived in quick succession during early and mid-1969 to become Deans of the Faculties.

The educational world reacted slowly to the new university, which at that time was working quietly in a large house in Belgrave Square in London. There were a few who wondered what would be the implications for them when the university really got started. In March 1969, nearly two years before about 24,000 students were to begin their courses, librarians were suddenly made anxious by the thought of the demand those students might create (Bumpus, 1969; later, Ashby, 1969). The TES still saw the project as a venture of faith (TES 25 Jul 1969), and MacArthur wrote in the Times that the Open University would need ten years to prove itself (Times 22 Jul 1969).

Officially and practically, the University was forging ahead. Walton Hall, a 70 acre site near Bletchley and on the edge of the embryonic New Town of Milton Keynes, was chosen as its future site, and in March 1969 the Planning Committee approved the first site development plan. The need for buildings was urgent; Perry (1972, 1976) has described how the architects were appointed, contracts signed and buildings erected with incredible speed to meet the deadlines.

The Charter and Statutes for the Open University received the Royal Assent in May. The Council of the University met for the first time in June, taking over from the Planning Committee. The Charter was formally presented to the University and Lord Crowther was installed as Chancellor in July. These were outward signs, duly reported in the national press, of intense activity in the offices in Belgrave Square.

By September about 40 academic staff were in post and course teams began meeting in earnest. The Arts Building was opened at Walton Hall and most of the staff moved out there. Early pictures of the campus show low buildings in dark brick among pleasant trees and thick mud. In one of these buildings, the Senate held its first meeting and agreed that the OU would offer only one bachelor's degree -- the B.A.

Under the University's Charter, the Privy Council set up an Academic Advisory Committee in October with the task of watching over academic standards during the first years of the new university's life.

There must have been many days that seemed like the point of no return in those early months, but the TES decided that the critical point had been passed in November (TES 28 Nov 1969). Perhaps the fact that the University had announced that it would take in 25,000 students for its first teaching year starting in January 1971, had something to do with the TES view (see Peter Scott, writing in the same issue). Around the same time, the University appointed the last of its first 11 Regional Directors (the twelfth and thirteenth were appointed several years later).

By the end of 1969 the Open University was established, but by no means secure.

Preparing for 25,000: 1970

Perry had committed himself to enrolling about 25,000 students in January 1971 without really knowing what the demand would be. A survey conducted by the National Institute of Adult Education indicated that the immediate demand would be somewhere between 35,000 and 184,000, but when the application period for the first cohort of students began in January 1970 staff anxiously watched each day the chart outside the Admissions Office showing the number of enquiries and the number of applications. The first figure climbed rapidly, the second rather more slowly.

By April, when about 80 academic staff were in post at Walton Hall and production of the four Foundation courses was in full swing, the applications had passed the 25,000 mark. Few people were troubled very much by an article in the TES pointing out that 'workers' were not applying (TES 22 May 1970). More buildings, including the Science Preparation Laboratories, were completed and opened for use. In May, the Alexandra Palace studios were opened by the BBC, having been converted to suit the Open University's purposes. Morale ran high. When Harold Wilson decided to go to the country to seek re-election of his party for another four years, only a few in the University expected what was about to happen.

In something of a landslide, the Conservatives were returned to Parliament. Days before, the University had received news of its triennial grant for 1971-3, but the new Government immediately ordered a review of public expenditure. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was Iain Macleod, who had been heard to say that the Open University was 'a blithering nonsense'. Immediately the whole future of the University was placed in doubt.

It is said that on the night that Iain Macleod died there was a paper on his desk proposing the abolition of the Open University.

Only weeks after the election the Conservative Government cut back the triennial grant by £1 million and announced delays in the building programme. These blows might have been far heavier, both financially

Preparing for 25,000: 1970

Jan	Application period for first cohort of students begins
Apr	About 80 academic staff in post at Walton Hall; production of four Foundation courses in full swing
May	Alexandra Palace BBC studios open for OU use
Jul	Conservative Party comes to power and orders review of public expenditure: future of OU in doubt and building programme delayed
Aug	Application period closes with 43,000 applications received out of 130,000 enquiries
Sep	Eight universities agree to accommodate summer schools of OU
	Places offered to the first cohort of students
	Council agrees to sell OU materials to the public
	Conservative Government cuts back 1972 and 1973 budgets for OU
Nov	About 120 academic staff in post at Walton Hall and another 40-odd in the regions, in preparation for teaching in 1971
Dec	Perry has heart attack
	Power shortages owing to strikes; computer operations hit
	Briefing of 4,800 part-time tutors and counsellors for 1971 ends
	OU gets own computer, at last
	Negotiations completed for 273 study centres, including 12 in universities

and psychologically, had the University not been able to point to a list of nearly 43,000 applicants (out of 130,000 enquirers) at the end of the application period in August. In September, eight universities agreed to accommodate the 1971 summer schools of the Open University, marking the start of an excellent symbiotic relationship in which the University makes use of the equipment, including laboratories, of the ordinary universities at a time when they are empty.

Some confidence returned as places were offered to, and accepted by, the applicants. The University Council, at its September meeting, agreed to sell all components of the University's learning materials to the general public. This action had the double consequence of making the courses available to non-registered students (who could not obtain credits towards a degree) and of placing before the public eye not only the television programmes but also all the printed materials.

Criticism came from Right and Left. Rhodes Boyson, a Conservative spokesman on educational matters, wrote an article entitled 'The non-University?' in the Spectator (Boyson, 1970). He got a reply, from Peter Smith, a member of the Faculty of Science, entitled 'The true University?' (Smith, 1970). John Pratt, a lecturer in sociology at the North-Eastern Polytechnic, attacked the University's failure to attract more working-class applicants (Pratt, 1970). These critical articles were outweighed by far, however, by the rash of descriptive papers that began to appear in the educational and academic press. The popular press did not really notice that the Open University existed.

The number of academic staff in post at Walton Hall rose to about 120 in November 1970; in addition there were about 40 academics appointed in the regions, in preparation for the teaching that was to begin in two months' time. As the end of the year approached, briefing of 4,800 part-time tutors and counsellors was completed and negotiations were finished for 273 study centres, including 12 in universities.

The pace of development at this time was almost unbearable. So many new systems had to be ready for the students that more than one member of staff was heard to say that the University needed another

year before teaching began. Matters were not helped by the fact that the traditional struggle between the Conservatives and the trade unions had been renewed with great intensity and the country faced a bleak winter. Strikes caused power cuts. Days of production at the University were lost through lack of light or heat or both. It seemed ironical that just as the University learned that at last it had been granted permission to install its own computer, computing operations were being hit by drops in voltage and power cuts lasting up to six hours.

Paul Medlicott wrote an article in a December issue of the TES entitled 'Hidden costs may hit Open University' (Medlicott, 1970). He was referring to financial costs, of course, and reflected continuing pessimism in some quarters about the University's viability. Amid these pressures and difficulties, the staff heard that Perry had had a heart attack while visiting the University of Edinburgh. He was 49 years old and survived.

First teaching year: 1971

Thus the Open University, long-awaited, began its first teaching year without an active Vice-Chancellor. The fact that 24,191 students were enrolled for its first four Foundation courses was encouraging. So was the fact that the Post Office set up a sorting office within the University to deal with the tides of mail soon to sweep in and out every day. Those floods were to be delayed somewhat, however, not entirely without warning. A seven-week national postal strike, the first in British history, started a week after the first teaching broadcasts. It really seemed to the staff that if the University could survive this too, other problems would dwindle to insignificance. A superhuman effort was called for to distribute the packages by road to study centres, for collection by students, many of whom had not yet met their tutors and counsellors. Students had to put off sending in their correspondence assignments until the end of the strike. When the strike did end, it took until June to clear up the backlog completely (Perry, 1973a).

There were some who saw that the University had definitely arrived when it started broadcasting (Jackson et al., 1971). There were others who still doubted: L. Chester wrote an article entitled 'The Open University: has it lost its way?' in the Sunday Times, suggesting that the whole project was misconceived (Chester, 1971). A more friendly note was struck, perhaps surprisingly, in the Daily Telegraph, which in February noted the high degree of enthusiasm among Open University staff and students (Clark, 1971). It was a source of some satisfaction to the University's staff to learn that a Louis Harris poll indicated that 31% of the United Kingdom population said they knew of the University when it started teaching in January. Not high enough, but quite good for an institution that had not really existed two years before.

Perry's illness kept him out of action for three months. The University had no Deputy Vice-Chancellor, but several senior staff on both academic and administrative sides took over most of Perry's work-load. Some matters had to be left until he was fit to return. Although his illness placed an additional load on some, the delegation of authority which followed set the pattern for the next few years. Indeed, it had been foreseen in the Charter, which provided for up to three Pro-Vice-Chancellors. These were duly elected, from among the academic staff, during 1971.

First teaching year: 1971

Jan	Post Office sets up a sorting office at the OU
	Seven-week national postal strike begins
	Perry out of action for start of teaching
	24,191 students enrol for first four Foundation courses
	Louis Harris poll: 31% of United Kingdom population say they know of OU
Mar	Editor of Times Educational Supplement predicts that as few as 1,000 may graduate out of first cohort of over 24,000
Apr	81% of students continue to final registration
	Upper limit of 42,000 set for 1973 by DES
May	Computer expels 610 by mistake
Jun	Backlog from postal strike is finally cleared
Jul	University changes to new internal structure
	Cutback of second intake announced and linked to financial cuts by Conservatives
Aug	Summer schools receive generally favourable press
	Institute of Civil Engineers says it will not recognise OU technology courses
	Students react strongly to criticisms of OU in Daily Telegraph
	21,000 picked by computer for second year
Sep	McArthur microscope
Nov	Educational Studies courses announced
	First end-of-year exams held for nearly 16,000 students in 133 centres
Dec	Average pass rate 75% for first year
	About 350 radio and 300 TV programmes made in 1971

The educational world was still sounding mildly sceptical about the Open University. While many journals and magazines, as well as newspapers, were carrying descriptions of various aspects of the University's operations, there was still a wait-and-see attitude. This attitude was probably based on the high dropout rates experienced by correspondence institutions everywhere and even by multi-media teaching systems like the Japanese NHK High School. In March 1971 the editor of the TES predicted that the number of graduates out of the first cohort of over 24,000 might be nearer 1,000 than 5,000 (Maclure, 1971). The first cohort had in fact registered provisionally in January and paid only part of the tuition fee; in April the students were required to register finally and to pay the balance. When 81% of the 24,000 starters did pay, the University felt justifiably triumphant in the face of the pessimists, at least in terms of the first four months' record. The Guardian reported that the Open University had kept its students (Bourne, 1971). The New Scientist carried an article entitled 'Moment of truth for Open University' (Valery, 1971a). On the other hand, Marghanita Laski wrote scathingly in the Listener -- 'Hey Jude, or the Open University' -- and John Pratt continued his attack, writing in the Higher Education Review (Laski, 1971; Pratt, 1971).

Within the University course production for 1972 was running at a much higher level than had production for 1971. Instead of four Foundation courses, teams were producing no less than 22 second-level courses. Admittedly, many of these were part-credits (Foundation courses are whole credits). The University's system for dealing with its students at a distance were also shaking down. In May that monster, the computer, was responsible for sending expulsion notices to 610 students, who, it declared, had not paid their fees. So reported the national, popular, regional and even local press with glee (e.g., Izbicki, 1971a). In fact, a damaged tape containing details of payments had not reached the University from the banks, and the University's computer had sent out notices automatically to tell the 610 that they had not been finally registered. Needless to say, all were reinstated.

During its first two years of life, the University functioned with an internal government structure of committees which consisted mainly of ad hoc working groups set up to deal with particular areas of development

as they arose. Council and Senate were there from very near the beginning, of course. In July 1971 the University adopted a new structure which formally recognised a number of earlier committees and established new ones to develop policy for the longer term. The three Pro-Vice-Chancellors fitted well into the new scheme, becoming chairmen of three important boards. These events did not attract attention outside the University, but marked a step towards institutionalisation. Inside the University some began to ask whether the brave experiment was about to become a hidebound bureaucracy, in which the mandarins of the administration conspired through manipulation of their committees to prevent change and to stunt growth except in their own empire. These were unjustified fears but bound to be expressed in what was in many ways a frontier community.

In July 1971 the University was faced with a decision: how many of the applicants for 1972 (over 35,000) should be admitted. Forecasting drop-out, throughput and graduation rates was difficult, but estimates had to be made carefully if the ceiling imposed by the Government of 42,000 students in 1973 was not to be exceeded. The University eventually announced that 21,000 would be selected. It was widely recognised that this cutback was linked to the financial stringencies imposed by the Conservatives.

The first summer schools of the University ran through July and August. For many of the central academic staff the schools were a great morale booster. The enthusiasm of the students -- their academic gluttony, as one professor put it -- was unbelievable. It was not that they were entirely uncritical: indeed, they kept their tutors up long after the bars had closed, debating points from their courses. The organisation of the schools came in for both praise and blame. Olga Bergman, wife of a student, wrote a little bitterly of the strict regulations and detailed instructions she found in her husband's 'Little white book' for his summer school (Bergman, 1971). Alan Cane, writing in the THES, thought the organisation was remarkably good, and described the students as incredibly enthusiastic (Cane, 1971).

If the University needed defenders it now had them in the students. While summer schools were going on Izbicki wrote a gloomy article in the Daily Telegraph entitled 'Open University runs into difficulties'

(Izbicki, 1971b). The same issue carried an editorial backing up Izbicki's views. Izbicki stated that though Mrs. Thatcher, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, supported the University, strong parliamentary pressures were building up for the abandonment of the project. He listed a wide range of teething troubles the University had had in its first year (including the computer's malfeasance) and said that the question of the University's standards remained unanswered. Students at several summer schools reacted strongly to these suggestions and a number of letters appeared in the press soon afterwards. Fortunately for the University, it now appears that Izbicki's view was unduly pessimistic.

To some extent Izbicki must have been influenced by another event, which Bourne had reported in the Guardian a few days previously (Bourne, 1971c). In response to an enquiry from a prospective Open University student, the Institution of Civil Engineers indicated that it would not recognise the University's technology courses. The statement was somewhat premature, since no details were then available of any of these courses -- the Foundation course was under development. Nevertheless, the Institution's rejection out of hand of the University's standards certainly bothered many students and was picked up by the national press. Izbicki reported that the University had entered into discussions with the Council of Engineering Institutions, the umbrella under which the Civil Engineers are included (Izbicki, 1971c).

Early in the University's life it became clear that there were great economies of scale in its operation. The University could afford to order thousands at a time, tens of thousands for the four-to-eight year life of a Foundation course with 5,000 students a year. Beyond the orders for its own students lay a market with the general public. The outstanding example, which attracted attention nationwide, was the McArthur microscope. Christopher Dodd has written the full story (Dodd, 1971) of how McArthur began to design his microscope, which is miniature, in 1932 and of how he used the prototype as a doctor in England and the Far East. McArthur was imprisoned by the Japanese, and lost his microscope for several years, but continued its development after the war. Small numbers were produced, made by hand, until he agreed with the Open University to adapt his microscope for the Science Foundation course

kits. The University gave him nine months to produce the first 7,500 in a cheap, light version in plastic. McArthur went to bed for a week to think about how it could be done. His microscope became part of the University's success. In addition to those used by its students, the University sold 2,280 to the public in 1972 (Perry, 1973b) and that year the microscope won the Design Award from the Duke of Edinburgh (O'Connor, 1972).

To return to 1971, the Educational Studies courses for 1972 were announced in November (Medlicott, 1971). The Faculty was the last to be formed yet seemed likely to become important in terms of student numbers since a large proportion of those enrolling were teachers. At about the same time the first end-of-year examinations were held for nearly 16,000 students in 133 centres. These students were the ones who had stayed the course and wanted a credit for having done so. They represented a very high proportion of those who had attended summer school, and the University could afford to feel reasonably satisfied, but not complacent, about the success rate in two of the Foundation courses, Humanities and Social Sciences, even if it felt some concern over the lower rate in Science and Mathematics.

When the examination results, vetted by external examiners, were published it became clear that 75% of those who had finally registered had obtained credits. This pass rate was lower than that of other British universities but considerably higher than that of other institutions teaching at a distance.

In spite of all the evidence of success, the University still experienced the occasional broadside. Robert Jackson, writing in the new THES in November 1971, stated bluntly that the Open University was not a university and should not pretend to be one (Jackson, 1971). To do so, he said, would be a waste of public money that could be used in better ways to provide education for that same group of educationally under-privileged for whom the Open University was intended. The very pretence would turn away those who did not want university level courses and the Open University would miss the chance to supplement the structure of home-based vocational further education (just what Harold Wilson declared a year later the University was not set up to supplement).

Jackson, a Fellow of All Souls, Oxford, felt that the essence of a university lay not so much in the skills it taught as in the life style it offered. He said that a university is a place where human beings live together in groups and share a certain set of experiences. The students at the Open University who thought they were participating in a university were deceiving themselves. The University itself was but another expensive subsidy handed out to the professional middle classes. Needless to say, Jackson's thunderbolts from his ivory tower were hurled back at him, in letters to the editor of the THES. Others were beginning to write articles like John Walsh's 'The Open University: breakthrough for Britain?' (Walsh, 1971).

The net spreads: 1972

For the second year in succession, winter industrial unrest threatened the functioning of the Open University in January. In spite of power shortages 36,100 students were enrolled, including 20,500 of the second cohort. These figures imply that not every student who obtained a credit in the 1971 courses continued to another course or courses in 1972, but the University expected some would take a rest before coming back in 1973 or 1974 and this is exactly what happened.

For 1972, the tutoring and counselling system was changed. In 1971 each student had a correspondence tutor or tutors who he did not meet since he had another person as class tutor. These roles were combined in 1972. In 1971 the student's counsellor was expected to play a non-academic role, but the University soon found that both students and counsellors wished to see counsellors occupying a tutorial role, within certain limits. Counsellors did this from January 1972.

One of the conditions of continued Conservative support was that the University should seek additional sources of non-Government income. Accordingly, the marketing potential for Open University learning materials in North America had been investigated during 1971. The prospect of spreading the net by opening some kind of office in the United States seemed attractive on several grounds and Perry crossed the Atlantic for discussions with interested parties, including several universities. While he was there he was joined by Lord Crowther, the Chancellor, whose links with financial backers were of vital importance. The financial talks were inconclusive since the University was not quite ready to move, and Perry returned to Britain. Crowther, who had been under considerable strain through pressures that had nothing to do with the University, collapsed and died at Heathrow Airport on his way home.

Another broadside was fired, this time by Tyrrell Burgess, colleague of John Pratt at the North-Eastern Polytechnic in London. Burgess, writing in New Society, claimed that the Open University had failed to reach its founders' objectives and had none of its own (Burgess, 1972). He wrote that it 'is indeed becoming a University (British style), in that its objectives are swiftly becoming ever more vague and its

The net spreads: 1972

Jan	Power shortages threaten OU functions
	Major changes made in tutoring and counselling arrangements
	36,100 students enrolled, including 20,500 in second cohort
	North American potential explored by Perry
Feb	Lord Crowther, first Chancellor, dies
Apr	Post-experience courses announced for 1973
Jul	Younger students' pilot announced for 1974
	Fowler talks of combined CNAA-OU 'National University'
Sep	Lord Gardiner appointed as second Chancellor
	Internal financial crisis causes squeeze
	Perry talks of continuing education for a million, based on OU
	Three US universities start trials using OU materials
Oct	Joint teaching with polytechnics favoured
	Joint scheme with Milton Keynes College of Education begins
Nov	Department of Education and Science agrees to finance TV and radio studios on Walton Hall campus
	Major marketing agreement signed with Harper & Row for North America
	Harold Wilson, Leader of the Opposition, visits the OU
Dec	BBC and OU agree to continue their partnership beyond 1975
	Sales of £347,000 for 1972

activities more and more self-justifying. (This) means that the University can avoid serious judgment of its performance'. His article showed that people involved in setting up the University, from Harold Wilson onwards, lacked clarity of objectives. He also criticised the teaching methods of the University, saying that they were, inevitably, subject - rather than learner-based. The Open University, said Burgess, was bound to operate in the élitist academic tradition, and would provide 'ornamental knowledge mainly to middle class people'. It would not mitigate social inequality, the purpose for which Burgess at least thought it had been founded.

A week later, Martin Trow, Professor of Sociology at the University of California in Berkeley, sprang to defend the Open University in the same journal (Trow, 1972). Trow, who has a good understanding of British higher education, said that he thought Burgess's verdict of failure was premature. He saw the Open University as having enormous potential as an institution of continuing adult education. Certainly by itself it could not hope to reduce appreciably social inequality, but as part of a movement for continuing education it could play a very important role.

The University's Charter requires it to do more than provide undergraduate courses alone. At least in harmony with Trow and with an eye to the professional and vocational education sector the University announced in April 1972 that it would be offering a small selection of post-experience courses the following year. Bourne, writing in the Guardian, saw this too as a spreading of the net, which it was (Bourne, 1972a).

A further spreading of the net was announced in July. For a year the University had been corresponding with the Government about a second condition of continued Conservative support: that the University should explore its potential for younger students, namely those between 18 and 20 years old. Views within the University ranged widely, from those who thought the University should under no circumstances allow itself to be diverted by a Conservative Government from its social aims of providing a second chance for adults (e.g. Wagner, 1972), to those who believed that if the money were made available the University should

welcome all comers, including the younger students. Doubts were expressed about the suitability of the courses and the teaching techniques for younger students, and about the capacity and motivation of younger students, with or without the A-level passes required for entrance to normal universities. Some took the view that to take younger students would bring the Open University into direct competition with the other universities and polytechnics, with dire consequences for future funding and part-time staffing recruitment. Ultimately, the University agreed in July that a pilot project would begin in January 1974 for 500 younger students. The agreement was commented upon widely (e.g. Bourne, 1972b; Dixon, 1972; Hill, 1972; Hughes, 1972; MacArthur and Binyon, 1972; Venning, 1972a), the comments echoing many of the views expressed inside the University.

After the fall of the Labour Government in 1970, Gerald Fowler, Minister of State for Higher Education in that Government, joined the University as Professor of Educational Administration. In July 1972, he proposed the amalgamation of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA), the body which validates and awards the degrees and diplomas gained in courses at polytechnics, with the Open University. He saw the two as combining to make a National University (Venning, 1972b). This idea did not meet with acclaim either inside the University or without.

The second year of summer schools passed by quite uneventfully, although the number of schools had increased to cater for the larger number of students and the new second-level courses (plus the Foundation course in Technology). Press reports were uniformly favourable (e.g. Bourne, 1972c; Cane, 1972; Holland, 1972) apart from recording a few critical comments from students.

In September, Lancaster University organised an international conference on higher education and invited Perry to speak. What he said may have sounded like science fiction to some: he proposed that the Open University might take care of the problems of obsolescent skills and increased leisure by taking a <u>million</u> adult students a year and teaching them on its own television channel. Up to 1,000 courses would be available, designed to keep professionals up to date with their professions, provide retraining for those whose skills had become

obsolescent or simply cater for those who wanted to fill their leisure by taking courses. The cost would be between £80 and £100 millions a year (Hartley, 1972a). He admitted that it would be a gigantic gamble (MacArthur, 1972a). Alec Hartley, commenting in the Guardian (Hartley, 1972b), thought there would be many difficulties in persuading the academic establishment to go along with such a scheme, but praised the Open University for 'lacking the traditional fear of change which inflicts other higher education institutions' and for being 'still very much a developing organism'.

The new Chancellor of the University following the death of Lord Crowther was to be Lord Gardiner, former Lord Chancellor in Wilson's cabinet, and a man with a fine record of law reform. He soon announced that he would become a student of the University himself by taking one of its courses (Wilby, 1973).

At about this time, the autumn of 1972, it became clear that the University's financial controls had not been feeding the right information to spending units, and that there was a real danger that the University would end the triennium in December 1973 in deficit. An internal squeeze was imposed, which caused a certain amount of alarm in spite of the many signs of success. The threatening situation brought about by the Conservatives' financial cuts for 1972 and 1973 was brought home even to those who believed that the University had a charmed life. Posts were frozen, a few contracts not renewed, and people felt they would have to work a little harder to keep up, after what Perry himself called a 'year of grinding labour' (Perry, 1973).

It was encouraging, however, to know that in North America there were four universities planning to use the Open University's materials in pilot projects. Three actually started the trials in September or October, at the University of Houston in Texas, Rutgers University in New Jersey and the University of Maryland outside Washington, D.C. The fourth, in San Diego, had to abandon its plans. The Carnegie Foundation granted a sum of $200,000 to the College Entrance Examination Board to evaluate the projects, the evaluation being carried out by Educational Testing Service of New Jersey. If the University's materials were going to be useful in North America, these projects would provide the evidence, under impeccable but neutral auspices.

The autumn also brought new evidence of the spreading net within the United Kingdom. After much discussion and planning, a joint scheme began under which students at the Milton Keynes College of Education, a small teachers' college a few miles from the University, could be enrolled out of phase (starting in October) for Open courses at the same time as being trained as teachers (Garwood, 1972). After three years under the scheme, they would emerge from the College with a teaching certificate and needing only one further credit to obtain an Open B.A. As the scheme began, a number of other colleges of education were approaching the University with various schemes of collaboration, some of which were to bear fruit. Equally importantly, four polytechnics had proposed discussions (Bourne, 1972d; MacArthur, 1972b; Venning, 1972c). Courses might be jointly planned and produced, Open University materials might become integral parts of courses leading to degrees and certificates elsewhere and other institutions' courses might be recognised for transfer. The prospect of the University becoming a catalyst in English higher education (although perhaps not in Scotland!) was an exciting one.

A dyspeptic note was struck, and a flood of letters to the editor unleashed, by a part-time tutor for the Social Sciences Foundation course, David Cohen. Cohen, in a THES article entitled 'A worm's eye view of the Open University experiment' (Cohen, 1972) filed a lengthy complaint. He queried his own qualifications to tutor the multi-disciplinary Foundation course. He faulted the University on its admission policy and complained that it condescended towards its part-time tutors. He said the quality of the course material was poor. Sadly, what he wrote showed that the University had failed to communicate its intentions clearly to one tutor at least.

The Government's commitment to the University was increased considerably by the announcement in November that in principle it had been agreed to finance the building of new television and radio studios on the Walton Hall site. These were necessary to replace the Alexandra Palace buildings, due to be returned to the Greater London Council, probably for demolition, in 1977. The agreement was reached only after long negotiation and inquiry into other alternatives, such as using studios already in existence. The cost was estimated to be £3-4 millions.

Perry's negotiations in North America had taken some time to complete, too, but in November a major marketing agreement was signed with Harper & Row, who became the University's sole agents in the United States and Canada. Since the initial order was for 21,000 books (Perry, 1973) it was perhaps surprising that this event excited little press comment. Were the correspondents beginning to get used to the big thinking of the Open University?

Harold Wilson, writing books and in Opposition, came to see how the 'University of the Air' was getting on. He visited a study centre to meet students, toured the campus and gave a lecture on constitutional differences between the Presidency of the United States and the Premiership of the United Kingdom. He noted that the Open University was among the few inventions of his that the Conservatives had not dismantled only to have to reconstitute them later.

Before the end of the year, the BBC and the Open University announced that they had agreed to continue their partnership beyond the end of the existing contract in 1975. And the Marketing Division announced that the sales in 1972 had been over £347,000. Everyone was waiting for the real news, however, about how many students with advanced placement would graduate.

Business booms: 1973

Almost unbelievably, the New Year began with no power shortages. No less than 44,400 students started their courses, including 2,400 on the new post-experience courses.

On January 11 1973 the award of degrees to 903 candidates was announced a press conference. In its first year of producing graduates, the University had gone 90% of the way towards the most pessimistic target of 1,000 out of 25,000 suggested a year before in the TES (Maclure, 1971). Pictures and stories about the graduates soon spilled into the pages of the national and local press. If the country needed any further indication that the Open University had arrived, it had it now. A Louis Harris poll showed that 44% of the United Kingdom said they knew about the University, up 13% over two years.

As if to show that the Conservatives knew a good horse to back when they say one, Mrs Margaret Thatcher, the Secretary of State for Education and Science, came on an official visit a few days after the press conference. She showed great interest in all that was being done, but particularly in the science kits sent to students. She was a science graduate herself.

When Perry's report for 1971 (not 1972) appeared in 1973, it contained the first financial statement covering a period of teaching. For the first time, costs per student could be worked out, admittedly with considerable caution since 1971 was atypical in a number of ways. The figures were variously interpreted by the press, but the most popular view was that the Open University was cheaper than others. The Daily Express carried a headline on March 2 which read 'A degree of economy: cut-price graduates from Open University'. The Daily Telegraph had a story by Izbicki headed 'Open University "best buy" for degrees' (Izbicki, 1973a). Inside the University nobody treated the news very seriously.

The Open University was not set up under the University Grants Committee, the funding buffer between the Government and the universities that helps to preserve the autonomy of the latter. During 1973 the chance came to join that particular club, but the University decided it

Business booms: 1973

Jan	First 903 graduates acclaimed nationally
	Official visit to the OU by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mrs Margaret Thatcher
	44,400 students start the year, including 2,400 on post-experience courses
Mar	Cost figures show OU is probably cheaper than other universities, say newspapers
	Perry is invited to join the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
May	Jennie Lee lays the foundation stone for the library
	Libros McGraw-Hill de Mexico begins translation of Mathematics and Science Foundation courses into Spanish, under licence from the OU
Jun	Graduation ceremony for 600 televised for two hours on BBC-2 from Alexandra Palace
Jul	Joint statement by OU and CNAA on collaboration with colleges of education
	Summer schools for 23,000 begin in 12 host universities
	DES announces grant to OU for 1974-6: £5.3 million cut from bid
Aug	First half sales of OU materials for 1973 over £450,000
Sep	Internal strife at OU over budgets reaches national press
	Japan prize awarded for OU radio programme on early musical instruments
Oct	OU agrees with four universities on joint production of biology course with Nuffield funds
Nov	New proposals mooted for tutoring and counselling in 1975
	OU rejects over half its 1973 applicants; no room
	British Council organises 2-week seminar on OU for 60 overseas educators
Dec	Conservative Government announces major cuts in funds for education; OU building programme further delayed
	Open University Students' Association holds first national conference

would be in its own interest to delay entry, since the club's rules and formulae for finance did not translate well to the University's unique case. Perry did accept an invitation to join the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals, however, and was elected chairman of the sub-committee starting to examine transferability of credit between British universities. His experience of a credit system, in Scotland and at the Open University, would stand him in good stead, and the Open University's catalytic effect might be enhanced.

Jennie Lee's contribution to the founding of the University was duly commemorated when she lay the foundation stone of the new library on a sunny day in May.

Business for the Open University was booming. Libros McGraw-Hill de Mexico became Latin American agents for the learning materials and began translation of the Science and Mathematics Foundation courses into Spanish under licence from the University. Other agents were appointed to cover between them many other countries. The Marketing Division was predicting sales of at least £450,000 in 1973. To be sure, the profit on £450,000 would not add very much to the 1973 income of over £10 million, drawn mainly from grants and student fees, but it seemed like a sound figure to expect after only two years' marketing.

Euphoria reached a peak at the graduation ceremony held in June at Alexandra Palace, where 3000 gathered in the Great Hall, a piece of faded Victorian splendour, for the presentation of over 600 graduates to the Chancellor, Lord Gardiner (Jones, 1973). Honorary degrees were awarded to a number of those involved in the early days of planning, including Jennie Lee, Peter Venables, Michael Young and Jane Drew, the architect of most of the Walton Hall buildings. The ceremony was televised live in colour on BBC-2 on a Saturday afternoon, occupying two hours of near-prime time. This was certainly one of those occasions when British pomp and circumstance make for marvellous publicity. A few objected to the gowns and other regalia and turned up without; presumably some others stayed away.

During the first half of 1973 the proposals of the James report on teacher training and the subsequent White Paper were discussed widely, particularly the proposal for a two-year Diploma of Higher Education and for in-service training of teachers on a regular basis. The roles of

the universities, the Council for National Academic Awards (and through it the polytechnics), the colleges of education and the Open University were examined closely in relation to the proposals. In July, the CNAA and the University made a joint policy statement on collaboration with colleges of education. This was a further indication of the possible widening of the University's sphere of influence.

Summer school business was brisk too (Gosling, 1973; Vaughan and Hill, 1973). No fewer than 23,000 students were to be catered for in 12 host universities. The complexity of this exercise logistically speaking was unbelievable, and not surprisingly some hard thinking had been going on inside the University about what would happen as more and more courses needing summer schools became ready for presentation. Discipline schools, as opposed to schools for students on a single course, offered some relief.

In the United States, the three pilot schemes had had a good year and plans were being laid to expand the number of courses available as from October. Some modifications would be made to the ways in which the Open University's materials were used (Zwicky, 1973).

Underlying the Alexandra Palace graduation euphoria was a very uneasy feeling, however, concealed from the public but certainly felt by many of the senior staff. In July 1972 the University had submitted its bid for funds for the triennium 1974-76. By mid-July 1973 no word had come from the Department of Education and Science about the level of grant for that period. The University's Planning Board was unable to recommend allocations without knowing what the level of funding would be; its meetings in the spring and summer had an unreal quality as members discussed principles and policies but not action. Would the grant be far below what the University had asked for, and if so how would development in the new triennium be restricted?

At last the University got its reply: the grant would be £5.3 million below what had been bid for (£38.9 million for the three years). This was a severe blow. Coupled to the financial limit was one of student numbers: undergraduates were not expected to exceed 42,000, excluding those in the the younger students pilot project and of course post-experience students. The University would not be expected to take more than 600 postgraduate students by 1976, nor offer more than 65 full credits or their equivalent

by that date. Post-experience course development was limited to four or five per year. As the THES (3 Aug 1973) said, the University budget had been trimmed, which meant it had obviously arrived as a university.

The knowledge that other universities were feeling the pinch too was not of much comfort, particularly in view of the fact that many of them had empty student places while the Open University had a long waiting list. Nor was it of much comfort to hear in August that the sales target of £450,000 in 1973 had been reached already (Jackson, 1973a). What was now required, however, was a quick allocation of the meagre new funds so that development in 1974 could go ahead. That speedy action turned out to be impossible.

Many people were away from the University in August, either in summer schools or on holiday. A small team worked on proposals for allocating the new money for 1974, and brought these to an all-day meeting of the Planning Board on September 18. By early evening the Board's exhausted members had hammered out a scheme, one which fostered development most in Science and Technology, the faculties producing courses at slower rates than the others and therefore furthest from their targets for second and third level courses. Educational Studies, also behind in its programme, came next, then Arts and Social Sciences, with Mathematics getting nothing. The total allocation of new funds available to faculties was only in the region of £100,000, for 1974, the rest having been already allocated elsewhere in the University.

To the astonishment of many staff, ten days after the Planning Board's meeting a letter appeared in the THES declaring the Social Science faculty's intention to stop work on D101, the new social science Foundation course, until the Board changed its allocation. The faculty's members felt that the addition of four new staff in Science and the same in Technology was likely to bias the University too much towards the 'science' side, as opposed to the 'arts' side. The THES carried an editorial headed 'Ill-judged decision by the Open University' (THES 28 Sep 1973), which supported the social scientists, and Izbicki wrote in the Daily Telegraph under the headline 'Open University dons "strike" in staffing row' (Izbicki, 1973b).

Feelings ran high inside the University. The Dean of Science, Michael Pentz, wrote a strong reply in the THES. Before leaving on a

further visit to the United States, Perry asked the Social Sciences faculty to withdraw its decision. On October 16 a stormy meeting of Senate, after lengthy discussion, by a narrow vote referred back the Planning Board's recommendations. Senate also demanded, as a safety measure, that allocations should not be made for more than a year ahead. This meant that it would be more difficult to get good staff, on such short contracts, but the majority in Senate wished to retain some flexibility in the University's plans for the triennium.

Over the next two months a compromise was found, and at the December Senate meeting faculties agreed to bury their differences, at least for the time being (Open House, 19 Dec 1973). A formula was used for 1974, and various study groups set up to examine the issues over which there had been so much fuss.

While this internal dispute raged, pleasanter things were happening outside. A radio programme prepared for one of the Arts faculty courses and dealing with early musical instruments was awarded the Japan Prize. In October, the Open University agreed with four other universities to enter upon joint production of a biology course, for use in all five universities; the Nuffield Foundation made a handsome grant for the purpose, with the possibility of more to follow. To meet some of the wide demand for information about the Open University's functioning, the British Council organised in November a 2-week seminar for over 60 overseas educators, mainly from universities. It was held at Walton Hall and Alexandra Palace and was staffed by the University and the BBC.

A committee charged with reviewing the tutoring and counselling arrangements in the regions came up with new proposals for 1975 (Chase, 1973a). Opinion was somewhat divided in the University over the question of how to provide face-to-face tutorial help, or indeed whether it was necessary to the extent some students wished. Counselling services, too, came in for their share of criticism from staff and students. The University reaffirmed its commitment to teaching at a distance and the proposals were sent round its boards and committees for discussion.

During the autumn it was announced that the University would be rejecting, for the first time, more than half the applicants for the

following year (Chase, 1973b; Fletcher, 1973). With the total limited by the Government to 42,000 no other action was possible. There was no room.

The surplus of applicants did nothing to please some. Michael Irwin, in an article entitled 'An academic cuckoo in the nest' in the New Statesman, criticised strongly the nature of the education being offered by the University (Irwin, 1973). He said that the impersonal teaching methods used by the University could not permit it to do more than make the best of a bad job, with the student working in isolation 'primed by letter and machine'. He considered that 'concentration', of personal contact and subject matter, lay at the heart of university teaching at its best. The diffuse courses of the Open University (he chose the Arts Foundation course as an example) together with its six or seven year study period for a degree, militated against such teaching.

The Government found itself faced with growing economic crisis in December. It had earlier announced a national moratorium on building which delayed still further new structures such as the Science and Technology block. The Chancellor of the Exchequer now announced major cuts in public expenditure, including funds for education. No details were available of the implications for the University's triennial budget, and another period of anxious waiting began for the staff, particularly those on contracts.

In spite of the uncertain economic climate, there was one further sign of booming business for the University in December. The Open University Students' Association held its first national conference at Leeds University, where 250 represented its 10,000 members. The sessions did not attract much attention in the press, except for those proposing that a medical faculty should be started! Michael Parkin reported on them in the Guardian (Parkin, 1973).

Yet another attack, widely reported in the press (e.g. Fairhall, 1973; Benford, 1973), now came from the Left. Michael Pollard, writing in Teachers World, claimed that as an experiment in democratising education the Open University had proved to be rather less effective than the trade unions' or the cooperative Movement's own education schemes.

Pollard said he had surveyed 50,000 employees in a large company, to find that only 30 were taking courses and only two of those were doing courses not directly related to their work. They were all white collar workers, according to Pollard. It was this vocational orientation of many of the students, including the teachers, that he decried. He proposed that the University should take positive steps to discriminate in favour of the genuine 'second-chance' cases (Pollard, 1973).

Thus the end of 1973 arrived accompanied by a hectic spate of examination board meetings and preparations for the new intake of students starting in 1975. The mood in the University at that time was a mixture of incurable optimism and mild scepticism. Could the University ever attain its goals?

Year of uncertainty: 1974

If the University needed a morale booster, it was surely available in January when it was learned that no fewer than 3,500 students had obtained sufficient credits (including credit exemptions) for a pass degree, and 170 enough for an honours degree (Holland, 1974; Izbicki, 1974). These figures exceeded earlier estimates within the University, and made the gloomy forecast of the editor of the TES look decidedly obsolete. Staff talked of the figure rising to 5,000 or even 7,000 a year, counting both pass and honours graduates. Press coverage of the announcement was magnificent: there was a national press and television conference in London and simultaneous regional press and conferences in 12 other centres, all complete with new graduates. The BBC's national television news carried an item about the graduates, as did all the national newspapers except the Sun. No fewer than 18 local BBC radio stations carried stories. Earlier in the week the well-known documentary series on BBC-2, Horizon, had included a 50-minute programme on the University (Open House 30 Jan 1974).

All this publicity was good for business and applications came in faster than ever before, reaching 15,000 before the end of January. Over 46,000 students started the year's studies, including those taking post-experience courses. The Open University formally opened a North American office in New York, in addition to continuing its commercial contract with Harper & Row, the publishers. The increase in the number of courses available meant that regular broadcasts before breakfast on weekdays and weekends became necessary on both television and radio. The annual January Louis Harris poll indicated that now 54% of the United Kingdom population said they knew something of the University.

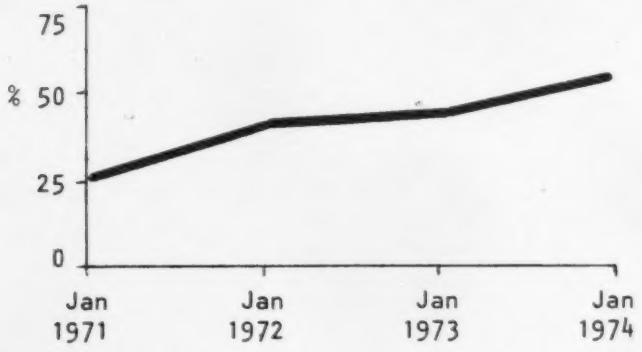

Fig. 2.6 Percentage of United Kingdom population aware of Open University
(Data source: Sesame 13 Feb 1974)

Year of uncertainty: 1974

Jan	3,500 get pass degrees (6 credits); 170 honours graduates (8 credits)
	Over 46,000 students start the year
	OU opens North American office in New York
	Increase in courses available requires regular broadcasts before breakfast on TV and radio
	National economic and industrial crisis threatens OU
Feb	Louis Harris poll: 54% of United Kingdom population say they know of the OU
Mar	Senate approves new tutoring and counselling scheme for 1976
	Labour returned to power; OU waits for funding verdict
Apr	University changes (again) to new internal structure
May	Applications for entry next year reach record level of over 43,000
	OU presses for funds to increase enrolments in 1975 and 1976; Government cautious in face of cuts elsewhere
	More TV time for OU criticised
Jun	Perry knighted
	Mr. Reg Prentice, Secretary of State for Education and Science, visits the University
	Report on American experiment favourable to OU
Jul	Senate agrees new academic 10-year plan for undergraduate courses
	Applications close at 52,537 for 1975 entry
	Prentice announces increase in funding to allow 20,000 to enter in 1975
Aug	£1.2 million grant for new Science and Technology building
Sep	Level of new funding becomes known; morale improves
	Sir Peter Venables, formerly chairman of the 1968-69 Planning Committee and latterly Pro-Vice-Chancellor, retires

Business was also becoming more and more difficult to conduct, however, as the Conservative Government continued its confrontation with the trade unions. A state of national emergency was declared. Restrictions were placed on the use of electricity. A three-day working week was introduced. The consequences for the University were severe, as indeed they were for many others. The Vice-Chancellor and his advisers seriously considered delaying the start of the academic year, which would have had many unavoidable and undesirable implications, such as the rescheduling of 1200 broadcasts (Jackson, 1974). Parts of the University operated in semi-darkness and without heating for two days a week. The working day was shortened to take into account the fact that in January it is dark in England by 3.30 p.m. or a little after. Only through valiant efforts did the first mailings of foundation course units go out on time in January, then to be delayed in some cases by the difficulties the Post Office was having. Some 25,000 home experiment kits were despatched on schedule by road (Sesame Jan/Feb 1974). The University's printers, companies up and down the country hit by the three-day week, did their best to deliver units on time. Second and third level courses were the ones delayed most. The computer's schedule slipped more and more, until at one stage it was nearly a week behind. The Vice-Chancellor had to write to students warning them that the University's tightly scheduled operations were very much threatened by the national crisis. (His letter was published in the TES.) The Open Forum programmes, on television and radio, became an invaluable channel for keeping students informed just as they had been in the postal strike of 1971.

The University had become accustomed to attacks from the Left, accusing it of not meeting the Left's objectives for it, but it was a little depressing to read a sober but critical article by Michael Dixon in the Financial Times in early February (Dixon, 1974a). Dixon suggested that the University's public relation officers did not enjoy being reminded that it had already disappointed three of the major expectations held of it. He listed these. First, some enthusiasts had hoped that the Open University would produce a technical revolution in teaching at the higher levels. Second, it had been hoped that the University would produce graduates at an extremely low unit cost to the country. Third, Labour party enthusiasts at least had expected that there were big reserves of working-class people who would leap at a second chance to take a degree; if these reserves existed, the Open

University had failed to tap them. Dixon considered that if the University continued on its present course, it might have to accept a role as 'just one element of the general higher education system' rather than becoming 'the electronic conqueror of Oxbridge'. He claimed that its future was probably under threat, with policy makers already comparing it with Concorde. It had 'the disadvantage of representing less already committed capital investment than a conventional university. Conventional clamour for expansion and for more state finance could prompt some government of the future to order its death. After all the Open's trials and labours, that would be a pity.'

Against this background of uncertainty meetings of the Planning Board were restrained. Following the autumn debate over resource allocation, a full-scale reappraisal of academic policy was being undertaken by a special committee, and the Board needed to know the new academic policy before it could plan very far ahead. Members of the Board also heard the way in which the economic crisis was hitting other universities: no new posts were being advertised, in some cases vacancies were not being filled, and at least one report came in of a university asking senior staff to consider retiring early. It became clear that the Government would exert financial pressure by removing the guarantee of supplementary grants to cover inflation in several sectors of expenditure.

In February, the outlook was extremely bad, financially speaking. If the same rule about grants to cover inflation were applied to the Open University, there was every chance that a major deficit, running into millions of pounds, would be incurred in 1975 and an even larger one in 1976. The figures were based on the assumption that inflation would run at 10% per annum or even higher.

After long discussion, the University's General Purposes Committee decided that there should be a temporary but complete moratorium on appointments, including the ones over which there had been so much battle in 1973 and including the renewal of contracts. The moratorium was to last two weeks, until a meeting of the Council, which, as the employer, would have to decide whether or not it should continue.

There is no doubt that the moratorium created considerable alarm and despondency. Various bodies in the University reacted vigorously, sending resolutions to the Council meeting calling for no staffing cuts to be made and for action to be taken to persuade the Government to adopt a positive attitude towards the University's needs and exempt it from the deflationary programme. Council in fact decided to lift the moratorium selectively, pending the outcome of the General Election.

The March Senate was conducted in subdued mood. The Vice-Chancellor could tell his colleagues nothing precisely about the effects of Government stringency on the triennial grant. The return of Gerald Fowler, Professor of Educational Administration, to Parliament and to be Minister of State for Higher Education, with Geoffrey Edge, Lecturer in Geography, as his Parliamentary Private Secretary, reduced the size of Senate by two but did not help to reduce the feeling of uncertainty. The meeting quietly reached agreement on a revised tutoring and counselling scheme, which made one person a joint tutor-counsellor at Foundation level, but kept the roles separate for higher level courses. The scheme's introduction was postponed to 1976.

In April, the University changed to a new internal structure, for the second time in its short history. Adjustments were made to create some new committees and abolish old ones which no longer seemed to serve a purpose. The Planning Board, responsible for the difficult decisions about what to recommend financially to Senate and Council, continued much as before. The Vice-Chancellor took back the academic helm by becoming chairman of a new Academic Board.

With the Labour party back in power, the University's chances of renegotiating its triennial grant seemed reasonable in spite of the unfavourable economic climate, as Peter Wilby reported in the Observer (Wilby, 1974). It was possible that the difficulties foreseen for 1975 and 1976 might be avoided. A record number of applications gave the University authorities new heart: by early May the number had risen to over 43,000, more than in any year including the first. It seemed well worth asking the Labour Government whether it would allow the University to expand beyond 42,000 students, thereby lowering at a stroke the cost

per student even if the total outlay was increased slightly. On the other hand, nobody in the University knew details of the negotiations going on between the Treasury and the Department of Education and Science. Nobody was in a position to relieve the uncertainty.

In late May, a debate in the House of Lords followed hard on the heels of the University's official request to the Department of Education and Science for a review of the triennial grant. The University asked for funds to permit 20,000 students to enter in 1975 and a further 25,000 in 1976, and to provide for more post-experience courses. It also asked for grants to cover inflation, which appeared likely to erode the purchasing power of the University's income by about 15% per year. In the House, Lord Gainsworthy, speaking for the Government, pointed out that the University was asking for additional sums at a time of economic difficulty when other institutions of higher education were facing cuts (Wood, 1974). He recognised, however, that the break-down of the University's expenditure was significantly different from that of other universities, therefore he had consented to the review. He also made it clear that Labour principles encompassed full support of the University. Many other peers commented favourably on the University's achievement, among them being Lady Lee and Lord Gardiner.

While the political and financial debates proceeded, the University came in for some sharp criticism from educationists who thought that it should not get increased air time (Walker, 1974). At a colloquium organised by the Standing Committee on Broadcasting, a non-aligned pressure group, the wastefulness of open-circuit broadcasting of television in higher education was contrasted with close-circuit and cable-borne television. Doubtless some of the speakers were thinking of the University's third- and fourth-level courses, many of which have only a few hundred students.

In June, three encouraging events occurred. The Vice-Chancellor was knighted. The Secretary of State for Education and Science, Mr. Reg Prentice, visited the Milton Keynes campus. And a report was released indicating a successful outcome for the Open University of the 12-month experiment at three American universities in using its materials. Sir Walter Perry, as he now became, told his staff that the honour was in

recognition of all their efforts. Mr. Prentice said that he was 'delighted to learn how the University is run and to see how skilfully and effectively it makes its distinctive contributions to higher education'. The American report showed that all three universities had decided to continue using the University's courses, even though some of their students had found the standard too high.

Against such cheerful news lay the leaden weight of the University's need to take decisions without having yet the information it wanted. The June Planning Board was told that September 20 was the latest date for deciding whether to admit 20,000 in 1975, instead of 14,000. The possibility of a large deficit in 1976 still loomed, since there had been no reply from the Department of Education and Science. Applications for 1975 were climbing steadily - in fact they reached 52,537 by the closing date, July 3.

On July 2, Senate agreed a new academic 10-year plan, following the re-appraisal of academic policy. As a corollary to the plan, which covered the undergraduate courses, a move was made to review the University's provision for courses in other areas. With its undergraduate programme consolidated, the University might poise itself for a second great leap forward in the continuing education area - if money could be found.

The first real hint that the minority Labour Government intended to do more than praise the University came on July 6, when Mr. Prentice announced in the House of Commons that more money would be made available to allow 6,000 more students to enter in 1975. Fletcher (1974) gave a factual report in the Daily Telegraph. Dixon (1974b), writing in the Financial Times, noted that Mr. Prentice had 'disappointed the University's hopes of a further increase of 25,000 new students' in 1976. He thought that this suggested that the Department of Education and Science remained 'doubtful about the large-scale expansion of the Open'. He said that the high drop-out rate among the University's students at later stages was causing concern. Devlin (1974), in the Times, thought that Mr. Prentice had been influenced by the University's success with students without educational qualifications. Cane (1974), reporting in the THES, saw the announcement as the successful outcome

of an intensive campaign by the Vice-Chancellor and Lady Lee, among others. He said that it was believed that Harold Wilson had taken a personal hand in the matter. Cane's article was accompanied by a cartoon in which Harold Wilson, as Oliver Twist, holds out a bowl towards Reg Prentice, as Mr. Squeers. Mr. Squeers is urged on by Jennie Lee, as Mrs. Squeers, who says, 'He looks a likely lad - give him some more'. In the background, other lads (cabinet ministers or academics?) look on.

The next piece of encouragement came at the end of July. The moratorium on building was lifted and the University received the green light for construction of the long-awaited Science and Technology building at a cost of £1.2 million. Since this sum was nearly 10% of the £13 million released for university buildings throughout the United Kingdom, the University could feel relatively well pleased.

In spite of the Parliamentary announcement in early July, the University did not know how much more money was to come its way, nor whether its bid to cover inflation would be met. That news did not come through for another two months, but when it did, the University was apparently well off, at least when compared with other universities. At the September Planning Board the new monies for 1975 were distributed fairly equitably and a feeling of renewed strength was abroad.

A few days later, Harold Wilson announced that there would be an election on October 10. The University's future was thus placed in jeopardy yet again, although most staff felt that the Conservatives or a Conservative-Liberal coalition would not be likely to go back on the new allocations if Labour failed to return to power. All the same, there were those who recalled similar optimism in 1970, and the opinion polls had been wrong too often for anyone to be confident of a clear Labour victory. The possibility of another hard winter of strikes and shortages was daunting.

Amid the renewed uncertainty, Sir Peter Venables retired as Chairman of Council and Pro-Vice Chancellor. His place was taken by Sir Frederick Warner, a distinguished engineer, but soon after he was asked to serve the University again by taking the chair of a

special committee set up to examine policy in the continuing education (post-experience) field, into which the University now considered it might move with greater speed.

In the event, the Labour Party won the election. Soon after, news of supplementary grants towards covering inflation in 1975-76 reached the University. Staff ended the year of uncertainty feeling that although there were many internal problems to be dealt with the University's future was assured for the next two years. Who could expect to see much further ahead in such difficult economic times?

During its first five years, the University faced scathing criticism, financial starvation and political extinction. Its successes in this short period were numerous enough to guarantee an apparently permanent place in British higher education. It continued to grow in spite of national crises and the general cutback in national spending on education. Nobody could call the climate sub-tropical, but at least it was not arctic.

Consolidation: 1975

The year began with the publication of further heartening evidence that Maclure's 1971 prediction that only 1,000 of the original students would graduate had been too pessimistic. No fewer than 5,300 students graduated, and Perry felt confident enough to suggest that 60% of the first cohort might get degrees in due course, even taking into account the drop-out rate (Gibb, 1975a). At about the same time it was revealed that the University had received 14,000 applications before the opening date for 1976 applications, an extremely encouraging start. The THES carried a report that the European Cultural Foundation had decided to study the Open University as one of several models to be included in a survey of how European countries had responded to the growing demand for post-secondary education (Cane, 1975). In The Bookseller, an article appeared, written by a prominent bookseller, urging other booksellers to stock Open University texts (Pattison, 1975).

These were external indications of continued interest in the Open University. Inside, some discontent brewed. The burden of course writing, heavy for five years and more, had allowed little time for academics to keep up with their research. Nor had the University been able to provide the right physical facilities. The erection of the Science and Technology building had been postponed several times; staff were obliged to travel large distances to use the libraries and laboratories of other universities. What would lack of research do to their promotion prospects and their chances of getting jobs in other universities if they wished to move? The matter came to a head after a survey of staff opinions by the OU Association of University Teachers, the results of which reached the press (Gibb, 1975b). There were also rumours going about that the University was being discriminated against in the Research Councils and elsewhere. The fact that the Planning Board had allocated additional funds for research at its meetings in late 1974 did little to alleviate the situation, which the University was forced to take seriously, as we shall see.

External relations with other universities superficially received a new boost when the United Kingdom Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals commended an exchange scheme for academic staff between

Consolidation: 1975

Jan	5,300 more graduate; Perry predicts 60% success for first cohort
	Revealed that 14,000 applications were in before opening date in December
	Academic staff complain of lack of research facilities
	Booksellers urged by bookseller to stock OU texts
	European Cultural Foundation decides to study OU model
Feb	Inter-university academic staff exchange scheme with OU commended by UK Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals
	Remote blackboard invention by OU technologists announced
Mar	£100,000 consultancy deal with Free University of Iran
	OU Council calls for support for OU research
	Senate envisages 75,000 undergraduates as target
Apr	Rumour that fees paid by students will be increased
	OU and Lancaster University agree scheme for transferring credits
	Venables Committee on Continuing Education begins review
May	Marketing figures for 1974 show sales of £481,000
	OU submits statement to Annan Committee on Broadcasting urging more air time for education
	Internal conflict over Iranian deal
Jun	Triennial submission sent to DES requesting £80 million for 1977-79
	Budget crisis due to inflation: £½-1½million shortfall 1975
	Tape-recorders no longer to be supplied to students
	Increased funds for research and evaluation
Jul	Record total of over 52,500 applicants for 1976
Aug	Gavin report published on OU academic staffing
	Credit transfer scheme not taken up by other universities, but signs that polytechnics are taking OU students
Sept	Vice-Chancellor goes on study leave to write history of OU
Oct	OU obliged to raise fees from £25 to £40 per credit

the Open University and other universities (Gibb, 1975c). This provided for secondment in order that academics from elsewhere could learn about OU production methods and contribute to the courses, and that OU academics could return temporarily to a more conventional environment with their new expertise. At the student level, there was talk of transferability of credit between Lancaster University and the OU, but nothing was settled yet (Gibb, 1975d).

In February, an attack on the University's teaching approach was launched by two former members of the Institute of Educational Technology's institutional research staff (Harris and Holmes, 1975). Writing in the TES, under the title 'Open to Martha, closed to Mary', Dave Harris and John Holmes referred to a passage in Crowther's inaugural address as Chancellor in 1969:

> 'One (view) regards the individual human mind as a vessel of varying capacity into which it is to be poured as much as it will hold of the knowledge and experience by which human society lives and moves. This is the Martha of education -- and we shall have plenty of these tasks to perform. But the Mary regards the human mind as a fire that has to be set alight and blown with the divine efflatus. That we also take as our ambition.'

Harris and Holmes took the view that 'the Martha' had come to dominate the activities of the Open University, and blamed the educational technologists. The cartoon accompanying the article showed two students with jugs as heads, into which was pouring a soup containing alphanumeric symbols. They alleged that the success of the University had to be held in doubt, since the kind of education it provided was 'far from being desirable in practice'. In particular, Harris and Holmes felt that the University did not provide in its course design for dialogue, and that its assignment system received too much emphasis. They expressed disappointment that the very nature of the University seemed to 'exclude the long-awaited mass success of working-class students'.

Such an attack from a possibly ill-informed outsider would not have been surprising; indeed, we have mentioned several in earlier

chapters. Harris had sat as an observer in several course teams, however, and Holmes had had contact with large numbers of students as an interviewer, admittedly of drop-outs. The article was quite mistaken in asserting that the teaching system failed to recognise what students as individuals bring to the educational experience they decided to undergo. Anyone who has spent time at summer school or in study centres or at home with Open University students will recognise that Harris and Holmes caricatured the University when they wrote: 'The new ivory tower at Milton Keynes simply dispenses knowledge to all, using principles which see students' everyday lives as producing only "noise" in the system' What was strangest of all about the article was that while it attacked rational approaches to course design, it did so on the basis of rational argument.

The urge in the University to increase dialogue in spite of the problems of students in getting to study centres was manifested in the invention in 1975 of a remote blackboard by two members of the Faculty of Technology. This device enables students to look at diagrams, graphs and formulae drawn by tutors at the same time as talking with them. The pictures appear on an ordinary television set, and are transmitted over the normal telephone lines. The device makes use of a pen and sketch pad which are wired so that the changing position of the pen as it moves across the pad is coded into a series of sounds. These are transmitted and received by ordinary telephone handsets placed in a special box. An attachment at the receiving end decodes the sounds into positions on the television screen. The cost of producing several hundred sets was expected to be around £50-60 each, the inventors declared. The sets would be particularly useful for higher level courses, for which students were often scattered very thinly across the country. Travel costs were going up faster than the costs of electronic communication, according to the Dean of Technology.

In March, the University announced its first large scale consultancy contract -- with the Free University of Iran (FUI). The FUI is being set up along the lines of the Open University, with adaptations to meet the country's specific needs. The contract, for about £100,000, provided for the training of FUI personnel at Milton

Keynes and for technical assistance in developing the FUI system in Tehran. The THES published the report without comment (Ferriman, 1975a). The contract was signed only after all proper procedures had been followed inside the University. Senate and Council were fully aware of what was being entered upon. No protest was raised. Indeed, there were those who congratulated the Consultancy Service, less than a year old, on its success. Only New Scientist asked the question: Does the OU have any qualms about helping the Shah?

The University Council had not allowed the discontent about research to go unnoticed. In particular, they took up the matter of alleged discrimination against the University by certain funding agencies. In March, the Council published a strong statement calling for support for research at the Open University (see Dickson,1975). The Council regretted that its plans for research and library facilities had suffered through a series of government cutbacks in capital expenditure on university buildings. It averred that:

> 'Because of the very success of the university in developing as a new and innovatory teaching institution over a period of years during which research has been inhibited by shortages of time and facilities, there had grown, in certain quarters, an impression, no doubt for the reasons described above, that it is nothing more than that; and is not and should not be an institution firmly rooted in the tradition of research and scholarship that is characteristic of other British universities.'

The statement called upon the Government to confirm its commitment to the aims of the University, including the aim of research, and appealled to grant-giving authorities to consider applications from the University staff on exactly the same basis as those from any other university.

This statement by the Council did not elicit an immediate response from the Government, but the THES in an editorial noted that it was 'an important allegation for a university to make and that the OU should

make public the evidence that would indicate that it had been unfairly treated'. The University did not do so, the point having been made.

The University's Triennial Submission to the DES was under discussion at the March Senate, although not yet finalised. Student numbers were the subject of lengthy debate, but at last it was agreed that the University should accept 75,000 undergraduates as its target for when the 'steady state' was reached (i.e., the time when the full complement of courses would be available, possibly in 1984). Reaching this target would depend on the level of funding available, but the figure indicated a change in the thinking in the University since the early years, when half that number seemed the limit.

In April, the new leaked out that the DES might require an increase in student fees as a condition attached to future grants for running the University (Izbicki, 1975). The increase was thought likely to be as much as 60% and was intended to bring the fees into line with changed values of money due to inflation. No changes had been made since the University started. The ordinary fee per course (full credit) would go up from £25 to £40.

Staff and students reacted sharply to this proposal. The opportunities for working-class students would be reduced, it was said, according to evidence collected by the Survey Research Department. It was no answer to declare that income from fees ought to contribute a fixed proportion to University costs, as the Government wished. Tuition fees in other universities contributed only 6.3% to costs, while at the Open University they had contributed nearly double that figure. The burden already lay more heavily on the students, who in many cases were unable to obtain grants to the extent that full-timers did. The matter could not be quickly settled, however, and discussions between the University and the DES continued, amid loud protests from the Student Association.

Indeed, the matter of the fee increase was taken to the House of Lords, where Jennie Lee, Lord Gardiner, Lord Ritchie-Calder (a member of Council for several years) and other peers made strong pleas for

a better solution to be found. Jennie Lee emphasised that the fee increase would discriminate against poorer members of the community, and that the total sum involved was not great from the Government's point of view. The reply from the Minister merely underlined the Government's intention to take into account inflation and the rise in incomes.

The scheme for transferring credits between Lancaster and the Open came to fruition at last (Dewhurst, 1975). On the face of it, the terms seemed a little lop-sided. Each Lancaster year would count for two OU credits. This was no change on earlier valuations of university courses elsewhere by the OU. It needed three OU credits, however, to exempt a student from Lancaster's Part 1, which is the first year of its three-year degree programme. In addition there was a provision for students with more than three credits to go on to the third year at Lancaster under exceptional conditions, not spelled out. The Senate approved the scheme on the understanding that it did not constitute a precedent for a more general scheme of transferability of credit, since proposals for such a scheme were due to come to its next meeting, in July.

Any other arrangement probably would not have gained acceptance in Lancaster and the Open University. The approaches at the two institutions are so different. The OU has the equivalent of a four-year Honours Degree, but Lancaster's lasts only three years. Lancaster directs its students into coherent courses of study far more than the OU, which allows its students maximum choice. The OU never takes academic qualifications into account when selecting students; the authorities at Lancaster always do.

Whatever the problems of implementing the scheme, staff at the Open University agreed that it was important for its successful students to have the chance to transfer to specialised studies if they wished, and that students at Lancaster who wished to abandon full-time study for personal reasons after being successful for a year or two should have the opportunity to enter the Open on agreed terms.

The scheme was the first of its kind between the Open and another British university, and it seemed likely that others would follow soon.

The last few members were appointed to the Venables Committee and it began its meetings in April. Its intention of covering a wide field became apparent as it called for written evidence from outside bodies on the needs and possibilities in the national development of continuing education, including professional education and training. The Committee seemed very aware that it would be essential in any such programme to link the Open University with a great many different agencies, although the exact nature of the linkages had yet to be determined.

Early May brought the marketing figures for 1974. At £481,000 they were very respectable, even if they were not the highest to date. Films showed increased sales, and course units accounted for over £260,000. The profit to the University was miniscule, however, and once again it was clear that no large income could be expected from this source, in spite of hopes to the contrary outside the University (Gibbin, 1975).

Although two years earlier the Vice-Chancellor had called for the fourth channel to be devoted to OU programmes, the submission of the University to the Annan Committee in May reflected different views. Now the OU opposed the view that all educational channels should be confined to a single fourth television channel, since that would become a kind of educational ghetto. The THES noted that for the foreseeable future the OU was not depending on video-cassette recorders or other products of new technologies for supplying audio-visual signals in the home, but was calling for increased air-time for education generally, including its own needs (Walker, 1975). The submission pointed out that the University's broadcasts were already reaching a wider audience than its own students and that its programmes acted as a shop window, attracting people to serious study as students. There was a need for an additional VHF radio channel too, to add to air-time available for education.

Meanwhile, the Iranian contract came into the headlines of Open House, the staff newspaper. The Association of University Teachers

had proclaimed a Day of Action as part of its militant battle for improved pay. The Open University branch had called a meeting for that day at Walton Hall. At the meeting an emergency resolution was presented by a Social Science lecturer, referring to alleged political oppression in Iran and the imprisonment of an Iranian Bradford University student. The resolution proposed refusal to cooperate with the Consultancy Service unless the University used its channels of communication with Iran to secure the release of the student concerned, and unless the consultancy contract was re-evaluated in the light of the allegations and also 'of the damage our implicit support of the regime may do to the OU in the eyes of the academic community at home and abroad'.

The resolution was supported by a large majority of those present, who included scarcely a single person from the Regions.

The details of subsequent events are too many to provide here. The upshot of it all was that Council and the Vice-Chancellor, after making enquiries, proposed that the contract should be continued. Senate voted, at its July meeting, to support Council's view. The voting was about 80 votes for and 20 against. Soon afterwards an article appeared in the THES reporting the development of the FUI to date and the OU's part in it (Ferriman, 1975b).

Over a period of more than a year the University had been preparing its bid to the DES for the next Triennium, 1977-79. In June the last finishing touches were added and the detailed document was sent off. It requested a total of £80 million to cover the three years, not taking into account the possible effects of inflation. The reason why inflation was not built into the figures was that the DES has customarily entertained later bids to cover inflation, at the rate at which it has occurred. The £80 million represented the sum required for maintaining the 1976 level of activity and for some new developments. The latter accounted for £11.5 million, representing about one-seventh of the total -- not an extravagant rate of growth for a very young institution. The figures were at mid-1976 prices.

Prominent among the developments envisaged were an increase to 63,000 finally registered (April) undergraduate students in 1979, an

increase in associate students (those not taking degrees) to 10,000 á year as from 1977, an increase to 700 of the numbers of students registered for higher degrees, and an increase in academic staff sufficient to guarantee that the University would have 87 credits available by 1982 (77 in 1979). In more generous times, the submission would have looked reasonable. In the light of events that occurred around the time it was submitted, it looked distinctly like an overbid.

No sooner had the submission been through various committees for the last time, than word went round that another budget crisis was upon the OU. A shortfall for 1975 was expected. The figure was difficult to estimate exactly, but would be between £½ and £1½ million. 1976 would bring a further deficit of £¾ million, and it would be essential to balance the books at the end of that year, before the new triennium began. There were reserves of £950,000 to set against these deficits, but the Council decided that in the light of the national economic situation every effort had to be made to economise internally. The causes of the deficit were undoubtedly inflation, which was not being wholly covered by supplementary grants from the Government, and also the slower through-put of students, which had led to more students being registered in 1975 than the OU had expected.

There ensued yet another round of cuts. Who could recall how many there had been since the University started? At least this time there was no general freeze, and morale was preserved at a reasonably high level. Nobody actually lost his job, although it became clear that extensions of contracts would become more and more difficult as 1976 drew near. One unfortunate consequence of the cuts was that units which had retained funds unspent in order to increase their flexibility of operation now had this 'soft' money taken away. The effect in the future would no doubt be to persuade heads of units to commit as much money as possible as quickly as possible.

Two interesting side-effects of the cuts were, first, that the OU decided to stop supplying students on certain courses with tape-recorders. The view was taken that enough students had these machines nowadays or could procure them at low cost. Second, in spite of the budget emergency, the University decided to set aside additional funds for academic

research and for evaluation. This was intended to be a sign of the right priorities, for the benefit of staff.

Incredibly, and in spite of reduced advertising, the number of applicants for 1976 rose to an all-time high of over 52,500 by the time the lists closed in July. What was worrying about this flattering total was that probably only some 17,000 students would be able to start studying. There simply would not be enough money for the University to risk taking more.

As one of England's best summers of the century wore into August, a report by a joint OU-DES committee on academic staffing was published. Called the Gavin Report, after its chairman, Dr. Gavin, formerly Principal of Chelsea College of Science and Technology, it estimated that between 331 and 370 academics would be needed to maintain and remake the OU's courses in the steady state. It noted that the heavy workloads of course production carried by the academics had prevented them from undertaking satisfactory amounts of research, and welcomed the interchange scheme mentioned earlier in this chapter. The Committee agreed that regional staff should be increased in relation to student numbers, a point of view likely to affect the balance between central and regional staff. On senior and junior full-time staff, the Committee recommended that the same ratio as currently accepted in other universities should apply, namely 4:6.

There had been a bid from some members of the University to have the 5,000 part-time staff counted in calculations of this ratio, but the Committee did not support that view.

It was difficult to predict the outcome of the Gavin Report. The state of the nation's economy seemed so poor that the report might be shelved. All that could be said was that its appearance was timely; it went to the DES at the same time as the Triennial Submission.

The July Senate had passed a general scheme for transferability of credit without much debate (in contrast to the occasion when an earlier scheme had been put forward). In August came the disappointing news that the OU's initiative had been rejected by one important body.

Gibb reported in the THES that the Standing Conference on University Entrance felt unable to recommend the scheme to its member universities because it was 'too early to give guidance to any university on the acceptability of Open University course credits.' (Gibb, 1975e, Holloway, 1975). Transferability of credit scarcely exists between English universities, and not at all between English and Scottish, therefore, it may have been too much to expect that the OU could break through so easily. All the same, after the Lancaster agreement, it looked like a setback. If the polytechnics were accepting OU credits, as reported in Sesame for August by Holson (1975), why could not the universities?

With September came a quickening of pace as the summer schools, again a great success from all accounts, ended and business at Milton Keynes began again. At the top there was a change. The Vice-Chancellor went off on study leave to write an official history of the early days of the University. His place as chief executive was taken by Professor Ralph Smith, who had been the OU's first Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning) for the previous four years, a torrid period indeed. Smith took over at a time when the University had battened down hatches; there was no prospect at all of new development for another 18 months, and consolidation seemed to be the watchword. In fact, apart from the first month or two, 1975 had been a year of consolidation.

A codicil

Anyone who has watched riders on the roller-coaster at a fun-fair knows the blend of pleasure and alarm on their faces. For many staff of the Open University, the early years offered that kind of excitement. There was always a new scheme afoot, but financial cuts and internal problems were never far away.

The story of the eighth year, 1976, has not yet been written. It certainly had its fair share of crises. Full details of the DES grant to the University for 1977-79 were simply not available at the expected time in the summer. Planning had to come to a stand-still. Even by December the University knew only about its position for 1977, with some inkling of what would happen in the other two years. Yet the 1977 settlement was more generous than many had expected, permitting some further growth. The Government, in the midst of its dire economic crisis that demanded vast cuts in public spending, favoured the University.

On another front, bitter dissension broke out between academics and administration over delays in production of certain course units, and students undoubtedly suffered, not in silence. The problems of managing the University's course production processes seemed more pressing than ever, yet less solvable.

A full account of 1976 will have to wait for a second edition of this monograph, when perhaps too the story of the University's development in 1977 will be included. Somebody suggested that the title would then need to be changed: after all, when does the setting up of the Open University end? Surely not yet? The University is securely established, but its development is still not complete. If the academic 'steady state' is reached in 1984, perhaps that will be the year, in spite of its Orwellian associations!

References

(in order of first appearance)

Introduction

Perry, Sir Walter
Open University
Milton Keynes: Open University, 1976

Perry, Walter
The early development of the Open University: Report of the Vice-Chancellor 1969-70
Milton Keynes: Open University, 1972

Perry, Walter
The first teaching year of the Open University: Report of the Vice-Chancellor 1971
Milton Keynes: Open University, 1973a

Perry, Walter
Report of the Vice-Chancellor 1972
Milton Keynes: Open University, 1973b

Perry, Walter
Report of the Vice-Chancellor, 1973
Milton Keynes: Open University, 1975

Tunstall, Jeremy (ed.)
The Open University opens
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974

Ferguson, John
The Open University from within
London: University of London Press, 1975

MacArthur, Brian
An interim history of the Open University
in Tunstall, Jeremy (ed.)
The Open University opens
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974

Establishing the Open University: 1963-69

Young, Michael
Is your child in the unlucky generation?
Where? 10, Autumn 1962

Turnstile, Magnus
B. Air
New Statesman 11 Mar 1966

Hooper, Richard
New Media in the OU: an international perspective
in Tunstall, Jeremy (ed.)
The Open University opens
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974

Grattan, Donald
The Open College Method
TES 14 Jul 1974

Jeger, Lena
Audacious novelty
Guardian 22 Oct 1965

Bumpus, J
How will libraries provide for the Open University?
TES 7 Mar 1969

Ashby, Robert F
The Open University - a librarian's view
Adult Education 42, 3 Sep 1969

Scott, Peter
Open University will take 25,000
TES 28 Nov 1969

Preparing for 25,000: 1970

Boyson, Rhodes
The non-University
Spectator 12 Sep 1970

Smith, Peter J
The true university?
Spectator 19 Sep 1970

Pratt, J
Gone to lunch: a critical look at the Open University
Education and Training Oct 1970

Medlicott, Paul
Hidden costs may hit Open University
TES 11 Dec 1970

First teaching year: 1971

Jackson, Brian; Laslett, Peter and Young, Michael
On the air: the end of a phase
Where? 53, Jan 1971

Chester, L
The Open University: has it lost its way?
Sunday Times 3 Jan 1971

Clark, K
High degree of enthusiasm at Open University
Daily Telegraph 10 Feb 1971

Maclure, Stuart
England's Open University
Change Mar/Apr 1971

Bourne, Richard
Open University keeps students
Guardian 27 Apr 1971a

Valery, Nicholas
Moment of truth for Open University
New Scientist 6 May 1971

Laski, Marghanita
Hey Jude, or the Open University
Listener 6 May 1971

Pratt, John
Open, University!
Higher Education Review 3, 2, Spring 1971

Izbicki, John
Mistake expelled 600 students from Open University
Daily Telegraph 25 May 1971a

Bergman, Olga
Little white book
Guardian 13 Aug 1971

Cane, Alan
OU summer schools a double triumph
THES 29 Oct 1971

Izbicki, John
Open University runs into difficulties
Daily Telegraph 31 Aug 1971b

Bourne, Richard
'Open' courses fail to get recognition
Guardian 19 Aug 1971b

Izbicki, John
Engineers will vet technology at Open University
Daily Telegraph 20 Aug 1971c

Dodd, Christopher
McArthur's miniatures
Guardian 18 Sep 1971

O'Connor, Maureen
Open microscope
Guardian 23 May 1972

Medlicott, P
OU unveils new faculty
THES 19 Nov 1971

Jackson, Robert
Focus blurred at Open University
THES 26 Nov 1971

Walsh, John
The Open University: breakthrough for Britain?
Science 174, Nov 1971

The net spreads: 1972

Burgess, Tyrrell
The Open University
New Society 27 Apr 1972

Trow, Martin
The Open University
New Society 4 May 1972

Bourne, Richard
Open University spreads net
Guardian 26 Apr 1972a

Wagner, Leslie
Student places: trying to find a cheap alternative
THES 14 Apr 1972

Bourne, Richard
University at 18 -- with no O levels
Guardian 5 July 1972b

Dixon, Michael
Open University experiment gives youth a chance to shine
Financial Times 5 Jul 1972

Hill, B
Open University plans to realize potential
TES 21 Jul 1972

Hughes, D
'Open' for adults or second-best adolescents
THES 14 Jul 1972

MacArthur, Brian and Binyon, Michael
Mixed reaction to OU teenager plan
THES 7 Jul 1972

Venning, P
OU to take on 18-year-olds
TES 7 Jul 1972a

Venning, P
'Merge OU in a national university'
TES 28 Jul 1972b

Bourne, Richard
Towards an open society
Guardian 1 Aug 1972c

Cane, Alan
Science is alive and well at the Open University
THES 11 Aug 1972

Holland, Joanna
'You can go to bed at three and get up at eight'
THES 4 Aug 1972

Hartley, Alex
Open University's grand strategy
Guardian 6 Sep 1972a

MacArthur, Brian
Television could teach a million adults every year - Dr Perry
THES 15 Sep 1972a

Hartley, Alec
Open doors
Guardian 26 Sep 1972b

Wilby, Peter
Chancellor to become a student
Observer 24 Jun 1972

Perry, Walter
Report of the Vice-Chancellor 1972
Milton Keynes: Open University, 1973

Garwood, Kenneth
Professional and academic respectability in Milton Keynes - Open University experiment
THES 6 Oct 1972

Bourne, Richard
Joint teaching idea favoured
Guardian 20 Oct 1972d

MacArthur, Brian
OU discusses joint degrees with London polytechnics
THES 20 Oct 1972b

Venning, P
College students may take OU degrees
TES 14 Jan 1972c

Cohen, David
A worm's eye view of the Open University experiment
THES 27 Oct 1972

Business booms: 1973

Izbicki, John
Open University 'best buy' for degrees
Daily Telegraph 2 Mar 1973a

Jones, A
First OU graduates get degrees
TES 29 Jun 1973

Gosling, Ken
University where a lecture begins with a beer
Times 6 Sep 1973

Vaughan, M and Hill, F
Boost for students to keep them going: Open University summer schools
TES 10 Aug 1973

Zwicky, Laurie
OU pilot scheme to continue - but will need modifications
THES 20 Jul 1973

Jackson, Mark
How to make a profit - by the Open University
Sunday Times 5 Aug 1973a

Izbicki, John
Open University dons 'strike' in staffing row
Daily Telegraph 28 Sep 1973b

Chase, Judy
OU doubles its postgraduate enrolment
THES 2 Nov 1973a

Chase, Judy
OU rethinks tutorial system
THES 2 Nov 1973b

Fletcher, David
Low drop-out rate cuts places for Open University
Daily Telegraph 7 Nov 1973

Irwin, Michael
An academic cuckoo in the nest
New Statesman 12 Oct 1973

Parkin, Michael
Open students want medical faculty
Guardian 31 Dec 1973

Fairhall, John
White collar students ' taking from second-chance entrants'
Guardian 28 Dec 1973

Benford, Mervyn
The Open has a closed mind on teachers
Teacher 2 Feb 1973

Pollard, Michael
Second chance -- or main chance?
Teachers World 28 Dec 1973

Year of uncertainty: 1974

Holland, Joanna
170 students emerge as first fully-fledged OU graduates
THES 25 Jan 1974

Izbicki, John
Degrees for 3,500 Open students
Daily Telegraph 25 Jan 1974

Jackson, Mark
Industrial crisis may hit OU
TES 11 Jan 1974

Dixon, Michael
Open University: choosing a course for the future
Financial Times 1 Feb 1974a

Wilby, Peter
Booming Open University seeks more aid
Observer 5 May 1974

Wood, Alan
Government cautious about expansion of OU in face of cuts elsewhere
THES 31 May 1974

Walker, David
More TV time for OU criticized
THES 17 May 1974

Fletcher, David
Open University to accept extra 6,000 students
Daily Telegraph 7 Jul 1974

Dixon, Michael
More money boosts Open University intake
Financial Times 11 Jul 1974b

Devlin, Tim
6,000 more students for Open University
Times 7 Jul 1974

Cane, Alan
Open University wins plea for 6,000 more students in 1975
THES 12 Jul 1974

Consolidation: 1975

Gibb, Frances
OU students show ' staying power' with 60% graduation
THES 31 Jan 1975a

Cane, Alan
New European research body will probe OU
THES 24 Jan 1975

Pattison, Hilary
Are you an OU stockist? If not, why not?
Bookseller 18 Jan 1975

Gibb, Frances
OU staff attack lack of research facilities
THES 17 Jan 1975b

Gibb, Frances
OU launches academic exchange scheme
THES 24 Jan 1975c

Gibb, Frances
Lancaster may accept OU students
THES 21 Feb 1975d

Harris, Dave and Holmes, John
Open to Martha, closed to Mary
TES 14 Feb 1975

Ferriman, Annabel
OU signs £100,000 deal with Iran government
THES 7 Mar 1975a

Dickson, David
OU calls for support on research
THES 7 Mar 1975

Izbicki, John
Fees fury at Open University
Daily Telegraph 5 Apr 1975

Dewhurst, Ernest
Learned credit cards
Guardian 11 Apr 1975

Gibbin, John
Open for business
Nature 6 Feb 1975

Walker, David
OU states serious doubts on new technology's value
THES 30 May 1975

Ferriman, Annabel
Open University techniques will help solve shortages of trained staff
THES 8 Aug 1975

Gibb, Frances
OU credit transfer offer rebuffed by universities
THES 8 Aug 1975e

Holloway, Les
Transfer scheme has gone a little 'ascue'
Sesame 5 Aug 1975

Hodson, Roland
Now they're all Poly-fillers!
Sesame 5 Aug 1975